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**VOICES OF THE VOID:
ANDREI CODRESCU'S TROPICAL REDISCOVERY
OF ROMANIAN CULTURE IN THE HOLE IN THE FLAG**

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Abstract: *An exile since 1966, Andrei Codrescu has constructed his pen-self mostly in the United States. One of the main ingredients he used in concocting his literary persona was his foreignness. Having started as a Western Transylvanian young artist in communist Romania, where the political and literary standards were dictated by the country's South Eastern capital of Bucharest--and also as a Jew in a covertly anti-Semitic nation-state--Codrescu eventually had to settle for the status of an immigrant Central East European writer in America. His alien identity, like his NPR accent, has been one indelible stamp of his style. And a test. One he may have hoped to resolve as he completed his long imagined return to his country of origin after the fall of communism.*

*The paper discusses the return of the native to post-1989 Romania and the negotiation of his reinsertion in Romanian culture in terms of an unsettled genealogy. Starting from the structural image of a signifying absence, I argue that the symbolism of the void is pivotal not just for Codrescu's self-representations in *The Hole in the Flag* and elsewhere in his texts on Romania, but also for at least two of the more spectacular lines of canonical discourse on the communal self in Romanian culture: the Anarchist-Metaphorical and the Radical-Antithetical. These terms come from a modified version of Hayden White's tropology and I use them to distinguish between competing ideological discourses on Romania's past, which aim to (re)construct Romanian identity starting from the image of the generative void.*